

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DHAHRA 00859 050830Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 HA-05 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 050555Z JUL 78
FM AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6357
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USLO RIYADH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC, SA
SUBJ: MEETING WITH EMIR OF EASTERN PROVINCE

REF: (A) DHAHRAN 0811, (B) DHAHRAN 0794, (C) DHAHRAN 0810,
(D) JIDDA 4943,

1. DURING MEETING WITH EMIR ABDUL MOHSIN BIN JILUWI ON
3 JULY CONSOFFS AGAIN RAISED QUESTION OF RELEASE OF MICHAEL
BRIDGES ON THE GROUNDS THAT NO EVIDENCE AGAINST HIM HAD
BEEN PRODUCED (PARA 3 REFTEL B.) POST WAS INFORMED
YESTERDAY BY COMPANY OFFICERS THAT BRIDGES IS SUFFERING
FROM A RECURRENCE OF A MILD ULCER PROBLEM AND THAT LOCAL
POLICE HAD WRITTEN AN OPINION RECOMMENDING HIS RELEASE
TO THE EMIR OF HOFUF. THE EASTERN PROVINCE EMIR PROMISED
TO CONTACT HIS COUNTERPART IN HOFUF THE SAME DAY TO
DETERMINE THE CAUSE FOR THE DELAY IN BRIDGES' RELEASE
AND TO ENSURE THAT HE IS RECEIVING PROPER MEDICAL CARE,
INCLUDING HOSPITALIZATION IF NECESSARY. THE EMIR ALSO
DISCUSSED AT LENGTH THE LETTER OF PROTEST PREPARED BY
CONGEN REGARDING THE TREATMENT OF BOTH MICHAEL BRIDGES
AND KENNETH CHRISTIANSEN ON THE NIGHT OF THEIR ARREST.
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THE EMIR EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE THAT THIS REPORT HAD
REACHED HIM SO QUICKLY AND HIS DISMAY THAT SUCH AN
INCIDENT HAD APPARENTLY TAKEN PLACE. EMIR BIN JILUWI
STATED THAT A FULL SCALE INVESTIGATION HAD BEEN INITIATED
AND THAT ANY OFFICIALS GUILTY OF MISTREATMENT WOULD
SWIFTLY BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. HE ASSURED CONSOFFS THAT
A FULL REPORT WOULD BE MADE TO THE CONGEN ASAP.

2. CONSOFFS AGAIN POINTED OUT THE CONTINUED DETENTION IN COUNTRY OF TWO AMERICANS PENDING A DECISION ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF NON-MUSLIMS BY THE ULEMA (REF A). AFTER SOME DISCUSSION THE EMIR STATED THAT HE BELIEVED THE BEST COURSE WOULD BE FOR THE AMERICANS TO ACCEPT THIS LARGELY CEREMONIAL PUNISHMENT AND TO THUS END THEIR LENGTHY DETENTION (REFTEL D). IN THE ABSENCE OF A DECISION BY THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS ELDERS EMIR BIN JILUWI DOES NOT FEEL IN A POSITION TO SUGGEST ANY OTHER METHOD OF RESOLVING THIS QUESTION. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE DETAINMENT OF MR. WILSON AND MR. CLIFFORD BEGAN THAT A FREE CHOICE OF SUCH PUNISHMENT HAS BEEN OFFERED BY THE EMIR. COMMENT: CONGEN CONTINUES TO REGARD APPLICATION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT TO ROUTINE ALCOHOL OFFENDERS AS AN UNFORTUNATE PRECEDENT. UNDER PRESSURE FOR RELEASE OF DETAINEES FROM LOCAL EXPATRIATE COMPANIES AND THE CONGEN, THE EMIR HAS EVIDENTLY ALTERED HIS POLICY OF STAUNCHLY REFUSING TO ADMINISTER SUCH PUNISHMENT TO NON-MUSLIMS. CONVERSELY THE EMIR IS NOT PREPARED TO FLY IN THE FACE OF A POSSIBLE NEGATIVE DECISION BY THE ULEMA ON THIS QUESTION BY SIMPLY REMOVING LASHES FROM THE SENTENCES INVOLVED.

3. ALTHOUGH CONGEN MANAGED INITIALLY TO CONVINCE AMERICANS DETAINED HERE THAT ACCEPTANCE OF SUCH LASHES WAS UNWISE AND AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNFORTUNATE PRECEDENT, IT IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT BOTH MEN WILL NOW EAGERLY ACCEPT SUCH PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR GREAT DESIRE TO DEPART THE COUNTRY WITHOUT ANY FURTHER DELAY. AMBASSADOR WEST WHO WAS TEMPORARILY IN DHAHRAN WAS FULLY BRIEFED ON THIS MATTER THE NIGHT OF 3 JULY. THE AMBASSADOR REQUESTED BOTH OF THE DETAINEES TO HOLD OFF ON ANY ACTION UNTIL HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE MATTER UP WITH SAG OFFICIALS IN RIYADH. AMBASSADOR WEST FLEW TO RIYADH FOR SUCH DISCUSSION EARLY ON 4 JULY.

MEYERS

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